



West Whitlawburn
Housing Co-operative

Policy Name	Career Break Policy
Policy Author	Director
Approved by Sub Committee	N/A
Approved by Management Committee	November 2022
Latest date of Next Review	November 2027

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Purpose of the Policy

This policy sets out the criteria and conditions of WWHC for allowing staff to have a career break from work.

1. Introduction

The Co-operative recognises that many people, at some stage in their working life, may wish to take time off work for a number of reasons, over and above the normal leave entitlement set out in Conditions of Service.

A career break which may also be referred to as a sabbatical, is when an employee is guaranteed re-employment with the organisation at the end of the break, provided that they have adhered to the terms and conditions of the agreement.

The job the staff member returns to will be of equal status but there is no guarantee of returning to the same post.

2. Eligibility

To be eligible to be considered for a Career Break the member of staff must:

- 2.1 Be a staff member with a permanent contract.
- 2.2 Have completed at least 5 years continuous service at time of proposed commencement of Career Break.
- 2.3 Have a satisfactory performance record at time of application and at time of commencement of any Career Break.
- 2.4 Have a satisfactory attendance record at time of application and at time of commencement of any Career Break.
- 2.5 Have no live disciplinary warning.
- 2.6 Indicate a firm intention of return to work.

Each case will be considered on its own merits in light of personal circumstances and the Co-operative's operational needs. The commencement and time allowed for each career break will be dictated by the needs of the business.

3. Career Break Conditions

The following will apply to any Career Break:

- 3.1 Minimum 3 months.
- 3.2 Maximum 18 months.
- 3.3 Any period of Career Break leave will be unpaid.
- 3.4 The employee is guaranteed re-employment in a similarly graded post with similar responsibilities, but not necessarily in the same post or section.
- 3.5 An employee can take a maximum of 2 career breaks. If an employee wishes to apply for a second career break, they must have a further 3 years continuous service from the first break.
- 3.6 A maximum of 2 members of WWHC staff shall be allowed on Career Break simultaneously, and only one person per section can be on Career Break at any one time.

4. Application Procedure

An application for a career break/sabbatical must be made to the senior officer at least 3 months before the requested start date. If the request is from the senior officer, it must be made to the Chairperson at least 3 months before the requested start date. The employee should complete a career break form which is attached to this policy.

- 4.1 Senior Officer/Chairperson will report on eligibility criteria and how any Career Break would be covered, along with a financial cost impact analysis to the Staffing Sub Committee/Management Committee for approval.
- 4.2 Confirmation of acceptance or non-acceptance will be made in writing, to the staff member, within 30 days of the application.

5. Effects on Terms and Conditions of Employment

- 5.1 During the period of career break leave, employees will have no entitlement to payment of salary, holiday or sick leave or any other mandatory benefits. If the employee has a Co-operative mobile phone, this must be returned to the Co-operative during the period of the career break.
- 5.2 Pension Scheme – Employer pension contributions will be suspended for the duration of the leave and the period will therefore not count towards the pensionable service.
Upon return from the career break, employees will be entitled to make good all contributions to the Co-operative's Pension Scheme omitted during the leave of absence within a period agreed by the Scheme Trustees. The employer will not however make contributions for that period.
- 5.3 Death Benefit Scheme – If the employee is entitled to the Death Benefit Scheme as per their terms and conditions it shall continue to apply during the employee's period of leave of absence and shall be calculated by reference to their earnings immediately before such period of absence commenced.
- 5.4 Professional Membership Fees - During the period of unpaid leave of absence, WWHC will not pay any professional subscriptions in respect of membership of professional bodies.
- 5.5 Redundancy - If redundancy should occur during a career break, the employee will be contacted, in writing, and the appropriate process will be used under WWHC's redundancy procedure.
- 5.6 Increments – Staff returning from sabbatical will not be entitled to an incremental increase unless they have been back at work for 6 months prior to 1st April. Staff, will however, be eligible to receive WWHC's cost of living rise in place at the time of their return to work.

- 5.7 Failure to return to work will be treated as a resignation.
- 5.8 The period of the career break will not count towards calculating any statutory or contractual benefits.
- 5.9 If WWHC makes any changes to the employee's post/grade/salary or any other conditions during the break, WWHC will write to the employee informing them of any changes.

6. Alternative Employment

The period of unpaid leave of absence is granted on the understanding that the employee will not take up any paid work during this period.

If they should do so then they will automatically lose their right to return to work unless previous approval is granted by the senior officer and confirmed in writing.

7. Communications

- 7.1 Where possible regular contact should be maintained with the Co-operative throughout the break.
- 7.2 The frequency and method of contact will be agreed between the employee and their line manager.
- 7.3 A monthly information pack containing any circulars, newsletters and other relevant material will be sent to any employee on a sabbatical by their line manager. Any relevant information will be sent to the employee's home address.

8. Returning to Work

- 8.1 An employee must give 3 months notice in writing to the senior manager of their intention to return to work. Failure to do so will be treated as a resignation.
- 8.2 The Section Head will notify the employee in writing of all instructions pertinent to the return to work, no less than 2 weeks prior to the return date, at the employee's notified address.
- 8.3 Unless a postponement has been agreed by The Co-operative, if an employee on Career Break fails to return to work after the Career Break, the Employee will lose the right to return to work. WWHC will assume that the employee has resigned from their post which will be effective from the end of their career break.
- 8.4 When the employee returns to work their line manager will conduct a re-entry meeting and cover areas such as changes within WWHC, salary and holiday entitlement.

9. Postponing the Date of Return

By WWHC:

If there are no suitable vacancies the Co-operative may postpone the date of return for up to 28 days. The employee will be informed of the revised date in writing. If WWHC postpones the date of return, the employee will not be paid any salary or other benefits during the postponement. However, the period of postponement will count towards the continuous service.

By the employee on Medical Grounds:

The date of return may be postponed by the employee on medical grounds only. The maximum period of postponement allowed is 28 days. If an employee is unable to return to work after this period the organisation may review the right to return to work. The employee will not be paid any salary or other benefits during the postponement but the period of delay will count towards continuous service.

10. Equalities

This Policy is equally applicable to all and has no detrimental impact on protected characteristic groups as specified within the Equality Act 2010.

11. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed in at least every five years or earlier in line with legislative or regulatory guidance changes or good practice guidelines.

WWHC reserves the right to alter or withdraw the scheme at any time.

WWHC Application for a Career Break

Name:

Date:.....

Present Position:

I would like to commence a Career Break on/...../..... and would like the break to last for months.

I am requesting a career break for the following reason:

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I have read WWHC's Career Break Policy and understand and accept the terms and conditions of WWHC's career break scheme.

Signed: **Date:**/...../.....

DATE
Letter
NAME
ADDRESS
ADDRESS
ADDRESS

EVH Template

Dear **NAME**

Career Break

Further to your request for a career break and your meeting with **INSERT NAME**, I am writing to confirm that your request has been approved for a period of **XXX** months.

The terms of your Career Break (sabbatical) are as follows:

- Your sabbatical will be unpaid and will last for a period of **XX**, and will commence on **DATE** and end on **DATE**.
- Your date of return from your sabbatical will be effective from **DATE**.
- You agree to return to work at the end of your sabbatical. If you fail to return to work on **DATE**, unless on medical grounds, you will lose your right to return to work.
- The Co-operative will aim to keep your post open for you, however, we cannot guarantee this. In the event that it is not possible, we will guarantee a return to a post with no less favourable terms and conditions of employment as the one you left.
- You will not continue to accrue length of service. You will not accrue any annual leave or public holiday entitlement from **DATE** to **DATE**.
- You will not be entitled to an incremental increase as you will/will not have worked at your current salary for a period of 6 months. (delete if appropriate)
- Pensions: Employer pension contributions will be suspended for the duration of the leave and the period will therefore not count towards the pensionable service. We cannot advise further as this is a private matter.
- You will have an option to make voluntary National Insurance Contributions. These contributions can be spread over a six year period if you are unable to make the contributions whilst on unpaid leave. It is not advisable to have a gap in your National Insurance

Contributions. We are unable to advise you further, however, advice can be obtained via your tax office.

- You may be entitled to an Income Tax refund. The tax year runs from 1 April to 31 March. To enquire if you are eligible for this please contact your relevant tax office.
- The Co-operative will not pay any professional subscriptions in respect of membership of professional bodies during your Career Break.
- If any organisational changes occur during this time that may impact you, you will be notified and consulted, where appropriate, in line with the relevant WWHC procedures.
- The period of your Career Break is granted on the understanding that you will not take up any paid work during this period, if you do so you will automatically lose your right to return to work, unless previous approval is granted by the senior officer/Chairperson and confirmed in writing.

Yours sincerely,

Name
Job Title